

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

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P 281218Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4657

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10656

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: THE POTENTIAL FOR ANTI-AMERICANISM IN THAILAND

REF: A. BANGKOK 10448; B. BANGKOK 4952; C. BANGKOK 9000

1. THAI SOCIETY, AS IT MOVES TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AND CRITICIZES ITS MILITARY OLIGARCHIC PAST, WILL INCREASINGLY QUESTION ITS CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, PARTICULARLY THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE. STUDENT ACTIVISTS HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF THE AMERICAN TENANTED BASES IN THE PAST, BUT NEW VOICES CHIME IN FROM A WIDE RANGE OF SECTORS. THE RECENT CRITICISMS FROM THE ULTRANATIONALISTIC UNITED FRONT FOR PEOPLE AND STUDENTS (UFPS) (REF A) HAVE ADDED TO THE VOCAL MINORITY OPPOSED TO ONE ASPECT OR ANOTHER OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND.

2. WE HAVE REPORTED EARLIER (REF B) THAT ACTIVIST LIBERAL GROUPS MAY PRESS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST AMERICAN-
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TENANTED BASES IN THAILAND. ONE OF THE STRONGEST CALLS

FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE CAME DURING A PANEL DISCUSSION AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY (REF C). IN ANOTHER VEIN, A SEMINAR AT THAMMASAT ON MAY 1 HIT THE THEME OF AMERICAN (AND JAPANESE) ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM. DURING THE RECENT TEXTILE WORKERS' STRIKE, DEMONSTRATORS BURNED EFFIGIES OF AMERICAN (AND JAPANESE) "CAPITALIST EXPLOITERS."

3. BOTH CONSULATES AT CHIANG MAI AND UDORN HAVE RECENTLY RECEIVED ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE CALLS THREATENING SOME SORT OF DIRECT ACTION AGAINST AMERICAN MILITARY PROPERTY IN THAILAND. BOTH AREAS ARE CURRENTLY QUIET, HOWEVER.

4. THE THAI PRESS--THROUGH DISTORTION, MISUNDERSTANDING, AND POOR JOURNALISM--SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTES TO A GROWING NATIONALISM AND MORE CRITICAL VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES. THE MEDIA AMPLIFY THE VOICES OF OUR DETRACTORS AND DEVELOP THE MILIEU WHICH ENCOURAGES FURTHER CRITICISMS, HOWEVER MISDIRECTED.

5. JOSEPH LELYVELD HAS WRITTEN A SERIES OF ARTICLES WHICH DEAL WITH THE U.S. MILITARY POSTURE IN ASIA AND INCLUDE THE AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THAILAND. A SHORT VERSION OF THESE ARTICLES APPEARED IN THE JUNE 24 AND 25 ISSUES OF THE "INSJH K KFL#HERALD TRIBUNE". THE WIRELESS FILE OF JUNE 26 CARRIED A DIFFERENT VERSION OF THESE ARTICLES IN WHICH LELYVELD COMMENTS THAT THE 7TH RADIO RESEARCH FIELD STATION AT UDORN "IS THE MOST SENSITIVE AND POSSIBLY THE MOST IMPORTANT" RESIDUAL AMERICAN INTEREST IN THAILAND. WHILE THE LOCAL PRESS HAS NOT PICKED UP THE LELYVELD ARTICLE, AND THE COMMENTS ON THE RRFS DID NOT APPEAR IN THE TRIBUNE, LOCAL ATTENTION COULD EVENTUALLY FOCUS ON THIS STATION WITH ITS HIGHLY VISIBLE ANTENNAE. PAST OF THE FAVORABLE PUBLICITY WE NOW RECEIVE FROM OUR GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF AIR FORCE UNITS COULD BE UNDERCUT. A KEY MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL COMMENTED TO US JUNE 27 THAT THE LELYVELD ARTICLE COULD CAUSE A NUMBER OF QUARTERS TO CALL INTO QUESTION THE FIDELITY OF AMERICAN COMMITMENTS TO THAILAND.

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6. COMMENT: PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN THAILAND GO THROUGH PERIODIC SURGES. WE SEEM TO BE APPROACHING ONE HIGH POINT NOW. WE ARE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO DEFUSE A POSSIBLE FOLLOW-ON DEMONSTRATION JUNE 29 TO THE UFPS PROTEST DEMAND TWO DAYS AGO (REF A). EVEN IF NOTHING OCCURS THIS WEEKEND, WE SHOULD EXPECT TOUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS SLEDDING DURING EARLY JULY.

KINTNER

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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